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ABSTRACT

During the fall of 2000, the Office of Institutional Research surveyed employers of the 1998-1999 Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) graduates. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate employer satisfaction with the job performance and general skills of PVCC graduates, as well as the effectiveness of the college's academic programs. Thirty employers responded. Results indicated that: (1) more than 80% rated graduates as either "excellent" or "good" in each of the six job performance categories--technical job skills, quality of work, quantity of work, attitude toward work, cooperation with peers, and cooperation with supervisors; (2) three of four employers rated graduates as either "excellent" or "good" in four of the general skills categories (math 91%; speaking 82%; logic 80%; research 77%); (3) in the writing skills category, more than 70% of employers rated graduates as "excellent" or "good"; (4) in the category of occupational training and education, more than 90% of employers rated PVCC as either "excellent" or "good"; (5) in terms of the general education PVCC provided to the 1998-1999 graduates, 95% of employers rated the college as "excellent" or "good"; and (6) overall, employers are satisfied with the job performance and general skills of the 1998-1999 graduates. Appended are the survey results, job titles of graduates and participating employers, employer comments, and the survey instrument. (EMH)

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Research Report No. 6-2001
July 2001

Piedmont Virginia Community College
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Introduction

During the fall of 2000, the Office of Institutional Research surveyed employers of 1998-99 Piedmont Community College (PVCC) graduates. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate employer satisfaction with the job performance and general skills of PVCC graduates, as well as the effectiveness of the college's academic programs. As one of the primary purposes of a college education for many students are to obtain a job, and attain success at that job, it is important for colleges to be able to evaluate the occupational success of it's students. One of the most effective ways to do this is to obtain the employer's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

This report is the 15th in a series of annual studies on PVCC graduates[1]. The results of the survey are included as Appendix A, job titles of graduates and participating employers are included as Appendix B, employer comments are included as Appendix C, and the survey instrument is included as Appendix D.

Methodology

To protect the privacy of PVCC graduates, surveys were only sent to employers of graduates who answered yes to the question "May we contact your employer to conduct an employer survey?" on the graduate survey. Of the 143 graduates who returned the graduate follow-up survey, 61, or 42.7%, responded yes. This figure is consistent with previous years (42% of the 1997-98 class, 34.8% of the 1996-97 class, and 50% of the 1995-96 class agreed).

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[1] Employer surveys have been conduced on annual basis since 1987 (see Ronald B. Head, *Employer Survey Results for the PVCC Graduating Class of 1984-85*, PVCC Research Report No. 5-87, June 1987). The most recent survey was published in 2001 (see Jennifer A. Shields, *Employer Survey Results for the PVCC Graduating Class of 1997-98*, PVCC Research Report No. 5-01, July 2001).

Surveying employers only with prior permission from PVCC graduates has the potential to bias the survey results. Although the possibility of self-selection bias is a valid concern, the privacy of the graduates dictates this method of subject selection. To investigate the level of bias due to this sampling method, the level of job satisfaction of all the 1998-98 graduates was compared with the job satisfaction of those graduates allowing their employers to be contacted.

This study found that there was a difference in job satisfaction levels between the groups. Overall, 89.4% of the responding 1998-99 graduates indicated that they were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their current jobs. Of the graduates who allowed their employers to be surveyed, 95% were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their jobs. A t-test was used to examine the difference in level of job satisfaction between groups. It was found that there was a significant difference between the groups (t= -6.337, p<.001). This difference indicates that caution should be used in generalizing the results of the employer survey. Since the graduates who agreed to participate in the employer survey differed significantly from the total group of 1998-99 graduates who responded to the graduate survey, it cannot be certain that their employer ratings would be comparable.

Evaluation of Job Performance

Employers were asked to evaluate the graduates' job performance in six categories: technical job skills, quality of work, quantity of work, attitude toward work, cooperation with peers, and cooperation with supervisors. As can be seen in Table 1, employers gave high ratings to the 1998-99 graduates in these

categories. Over 80% of employers rated graduates as either "Excellent" or "Good" in every category. This percentage was even higher in the categories of technical skills and quality of work, with 95% of employers giving graduates "Excellent" or "Good" ratings.

Table 1: Evaluation of Job Performance

	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor	
Category	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Techincal Job Skills	23	57.5%	15	37.5%	1	2.5%	1	2.5%
Quality of Work	20	50.0%	18	45.0%	2	5.0%	0	0.0%
Quantity of Work	20	50.0%	15	37.5%	5	12.5%	0	0.0%
Attitude Toward Work	19	47.5%	17	42.5%	4	10.0%	0	0.0%
Cooperation with Peers	19	47.5%	14	35.0%	7	17.5%	0	0.0%
Cooperation with Supervisors	22	55.0%	13	32.5%	4	10.0%	1	2.5%

To put these ratings in perspective, it is useful to compare the ratings for the 1998-99 graduates to previous graduates. Table 2 compares the percent of "Excellent" and "Good" ratings for the 1998-99 graduates to the average for the past five years.

Table 2: Job Performance Rating Comparison

Category	1998-99 Ratings	5-Year Average	Difference
Technical Skills	95.0%	86.9%	8.1%
Quality of Work	95.0%	86.1%	8.9%
Quantity of Work	87.5%	79.7%	7.8%
Attitude Toward Work	90.0%	85.7%	4.3%
Cooperation with Peers	82.5%	85.6%	-3.1%
Cooperation with Supervisors	87.5%	91.1%	-3.6%

As can be seen above, 1998-99 graduates received higher than average ratings in 4 of 6 job performance categories (quality of work, +8.9%; technical job skills, +8.1%; quantity of work, +7.8%; and attitude toward work, +4.3). The ratings in the two remaining categories fell only slightly below average (cooperation with supervisors, -3.6% and cooperation with peers, -3.1%).

Evaluation of General Skills

Employers were also asked to evaluate the general skills of the PVCC graduates. Overall, the ratings in these categories (math skills, writing skills, speaking skills, research skills and logic skills) indicate employers of the 1998-99 graduates are satisfied with the general skills of the PVCC graduates, as shown in Table 3. Three of four employers rated graduates as either "Excellent" or "Good" in four of the general skills categories (math skills, 90.9%; speaking skills, 81.6%; logic skills, 80% and research skills, 76.7%). In the writing skills category, more than 70% (72.2%) of employers rated graduates as "Excellent" or "Good."

Table 3: Evaluation of General Skills

	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor	
Category	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Math Skills	12	36.4%	18	54.5%	3	9.1%	0	0.0%
Writing Skills	5	13.9%	21	58.3%	10	27.8%	0	0.0%
Speaking Skills	11	28.9%	20	52.7%	7	18.4%	0	0.0%
Research Skills	7	23.3%	16	53.3%	5	16.7%	2	6.7%
Logic Skills	15	37.5%	17	42.5%	7	17.5%	1	2.5%

Again, interpretation of these ratings is more meaningful when they are compared to ratings of past graduates. Table 4 shows the 1998-99 graduate ratings compared with the 5-year average. The 1998-99 graduates were rated above average in every general skills category (math skills, +7.6%; speaking skills, +5.9%; research skills, +5.5%; logic skills, +2.7%; and writing skills, +0.5%).

Table 4: General Skills Rating Comparison

Category	1998-99 Ratings	5-Year Average	Difference
Math Skills	90.9%	83.3%	7.6%
Writing Skills	72.2%	71.7%	0.5%
Speaking Skills	81.6%	75.7%	5.9%
Research Skills	76.7%	71.2%	5.5%
Logic Skills	80.0%	77.3%	2.7%

Evaluation of PVCC Education and Training

In addition to rating the 1998-99 graduates in the areas of job performance and general skills, employers were asked to rate PVCC in terms of the occupational training and education and general education it provided its graduates. The results of this evaluation are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: PVCC Evaluation

	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor	
Category	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Occupational Training & Education	14	38.9%	20	55.5%	2	5.6%	0	0.0%
General Education	8	21.0%	28	73.7%	2	5.3%	0	0.0%

As can be seen above, the employers surveyed reported being as satisfied with PVCC as they were with its graduates. In the category of occupational training and education, over 90% (94.4%) of employers rated PVCC as either "Excellent" or "Good." In terms of the general education PVCC provided to the 1998-99 graduates, employers were equally as satisfied (general education, 94.7%).

In comparison with previous employer surveys, employers rated the general education provided by PVCC higher than average (+9.0%). The occupational training and education PVCC provided to its 1998-99 graduates

was also rated "Excellent" or "Good" by more employers than in previous years (+6.6%).

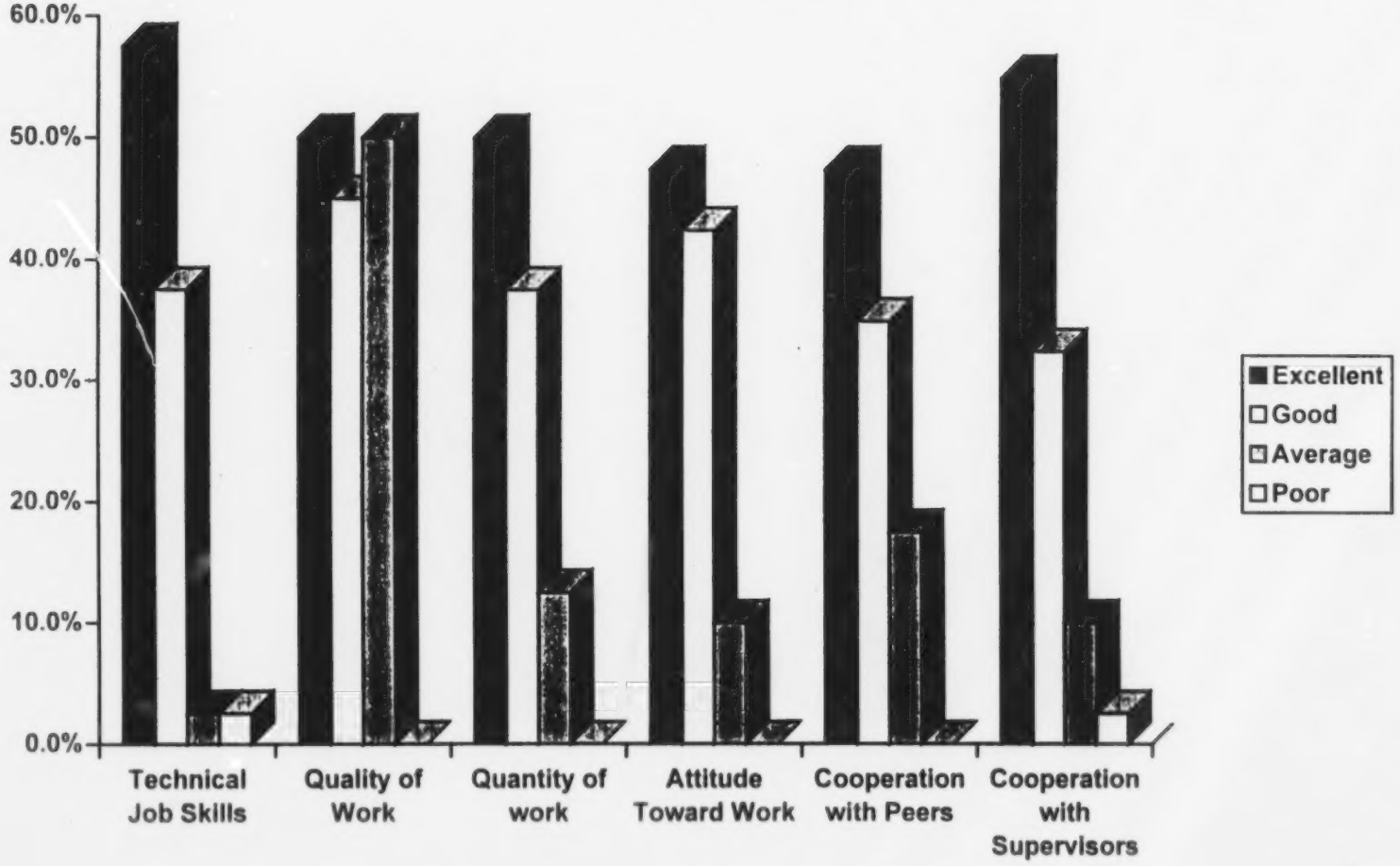
Table 6: PVCC Rating Comparisons

Category	1998-99 Ratings	5-Year Average	Difference
Occupational Training & Education	94.4%	87.8%	6.6%
General Education	94.7%	85.7%	9.0%

Conclusions

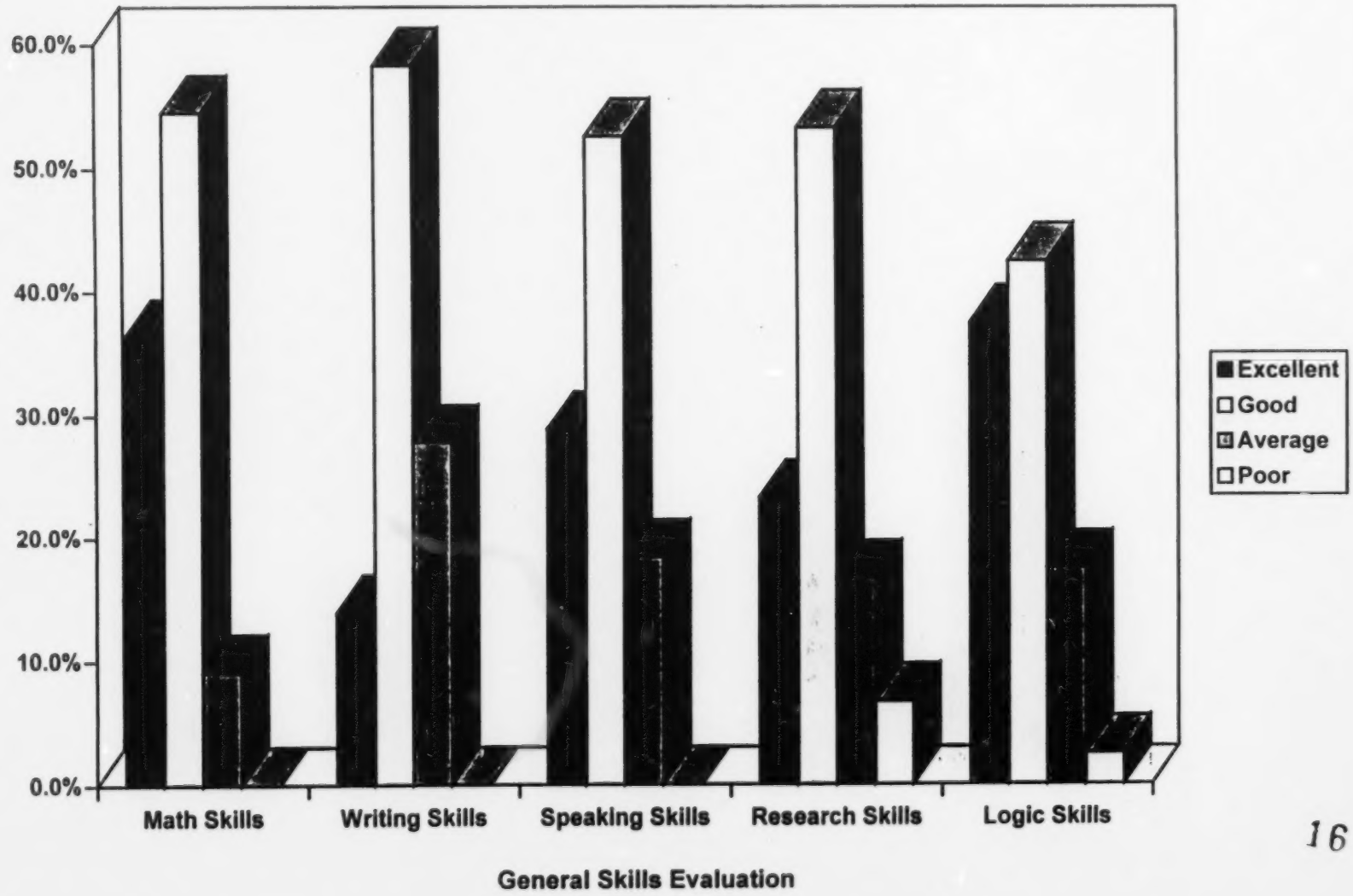
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, of employers of the 1998-99 PVCC graduates. Based on the responses from the 41-particpating employers, it was found that employers are satisfied with the job performance and general skills of the 1998-99 graduates. In most job performance categories, the 1998-99 graduates received higher than average ratings. Employers also indicated through their ratings that they are satisfied with the training and education PVCC provides its graduates. The following comment from the employer survey perhaps best summarizes the feelings of the employers of 1998-99 graduates: "This program has been successful and is very beneficial to those who have taken part in it."

Appendix A: Results of Graduate Survey


60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
Technical Job Skills
Quality of Work
Quantity of work
Attitude Toward Work
Cooperation with Peers
Cooperation with Supervisors
Excellent
Good
Average
Poor
Job Performance Evaluations

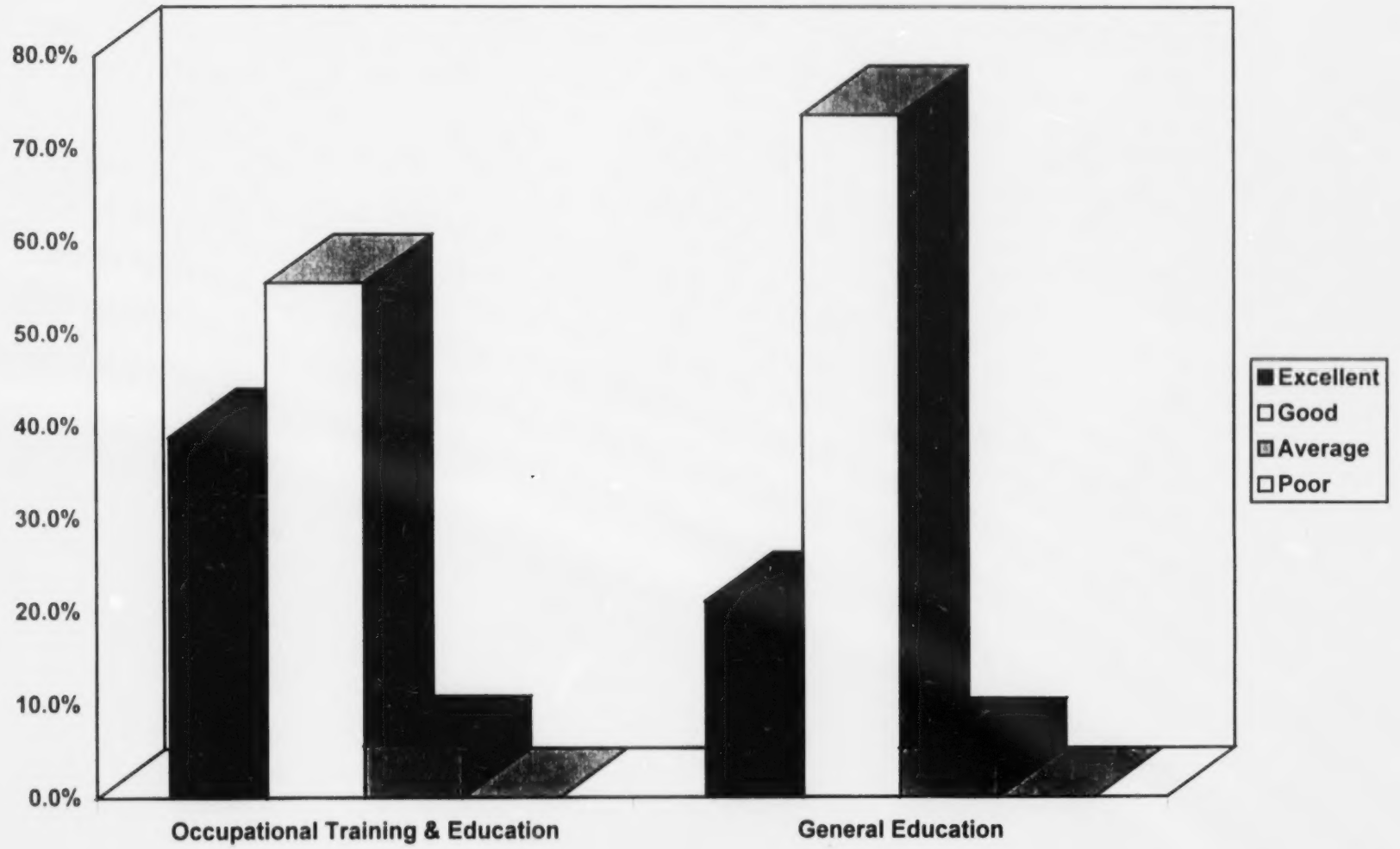
13

14


60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
Math Skills
Writing Skills
Speaking Skills
Research Skills
Logic Skills
Excellent
Good
Average
Poor
General Skills Evaluation

15

16


80.0%
70.0%
60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
Excellent
Good
Average
Poor
Occupational Training & Education
General Education
PVCC Evaluation

17

18

Appendix B: Job Titles & Participating Employers

Job Titles of Participating Graduates

A/R Mgr., Office Assistant
Accreditation Manager
Bookkeeper; Service Tech
Carpenter
Certified Nursing Assistant
Clinician I RN
Home Visitor
Member Service Coordinator
Order Fulfillment Specialist
Police Patrol Sergeant
Pre-op/PACO BN
Prepress Technical Specialist
Program Support Technician
R.N.
Registered Nurse
Registered Nurse Clinician I
Registered Nurse, Clinician II
RN - Staff Nurse
RN Clinician I
RN MDS/Care Plan Coordinator
Sheet Metal Mach.
Staff Nurse
State Trooper
Supervisor Mechanic III
Teacher
Teacher's Aid

Participating Employers

Bank of America
Brownsville Elementary School
Carpenter Emergency Lighting
CASBA
Charlottesville DSS
Charlottesville Police Department
Chili's Restaurant
GE Fanuc
Guaranty Bank
Hantzmon, Wiebel & Company
HealthSouth
Martha Jefferson Hospital
Old Michie Theatre
Orange County School System
PVCC
Region 10
Safety Software, Inc.
SNL Securities
State Farm Insurance
The Covenant School
Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation
University of Virginia
University of Virginia Hospital
UVA Health Science Center - CCU
UVA Health Systems
UVA Police Department
Virginia Power
Virtex Finishing Systems, Inc.
Western State Hospital
Wood Fabricators

Appendix C: Employer Comments

Employer Comments

"How do you accommodate home-schooled children?"

"[PVCC graduate] was a mixed blessing for us. Sometimes she was unreliable. [PVCC graduate] is highly specialized, however, as an employee all of the fine and performing arts. She easily can use an electronic Yamaha piano keyboard, which requires much skill and training in music and technology. Specifically she taught children voice classes; helped coach drama productions; and often accompanied and arranged the music for our plays. She had attendance and punctuality problems, and often bad-mouthed those in a supervisory setting in an unprofessional manner. To this, she was immature with adults but excellent in dealing with children!"

"We have a lot of employees who are or who have taken part in your education program. This program has been successful and is very beneficial to those who have taken part in it."

"[PVCC graduate] was a real asset to our school system. Her knowledge and personality were extraordinary. So sorry she moved out of the state."

"One program I would like to see is an easier bridge from LPN to RN for working people. Most of the interested participants would be financially unable to leave their jobs to pursue their degree. Any information would be greatly appreciated."

"I am partial to PVCC as I am also a graduate of its nursing program and thought it gave an excellent foundation (and without any other degree became director of the Cancer Care Center)."

"[PVCC graduate] said that PVCC has been his best educational experience since high school! He attended JMU and currently attends UVA. [PVCC graduate] really blossomed from his PVCC experience."

Appendix D: Survey Instrument

Piedmont Virginia Community College
Employer Survey for the Graduating Class of 1997-98

Instructions: Please check the appropriate box for each question. This information will be treated as strictly confidential with answers being combined for group analysis.

1. Compared to other employees you hire in a similar capacity, how does [PVCC Graduate] rate on each of the following job performance and general skill measures?

	"Excellent	"Good"	"Average"	"Poor"	N/A
Technical job skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quantity of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attitude toward work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooperation with fellow workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooperation with supervisors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Math skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Writing skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Speaking skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Research skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Logic skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Compared to similar colleges whose graduates you hire, how does PVCC rate in terms of the quality of education and training provided?

	"Excellent"	"Good"	"Average"	"Poor"	N/A
Occupational education & training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
General education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Was a degree from PVCC required to obtain this job? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Was a degree from PVCC required to obtain a job promotion? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Did you participate in PVCC's cooperative education program? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. If not, are you interested in learning more about the program? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Please use the reverse side of this survey to make any written comments you think will be helpful to PVCC in evaluating the success of its academic programs and graduates.